

A Brief History of the U.S. Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City



The history of the property occupied by the U.S. Consulate General at 4 Le Duan Boulevard is entwined with the U.S. wartime involvement in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s. The U.S. Government acquired the property, which had been part of the French military garrison, from the French Government in 1949. Construction of an embassy on the site did not begin until the 1965 bombing of the U.S. Embassy on Ham Nghi Boulevard. This prompted U.S. President Lyndon Johnson to order the construction of a more secure facility. The new U.S. Embassy opened in September 1967. Four months later the Embassy was attacked by forces of the National Liberation Front during the Tet Offensive. In April 1975 U.S. diplomats evacuated the Embassy as North Vietnamese troops marched into Saigon.

For two decades the U.S. had no diplomatic presence in Vietnam. In 1995 diplomatic relations were established between Washington and Hanoi. Three years later U.S. diplomats returned to Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, and reclaimed the former property at 4 Le Duan. The old chancery, which had fallen into disrepair during the twenty-year absence of the Americans, was razed. The new Consulate General opened on the site in 1999.

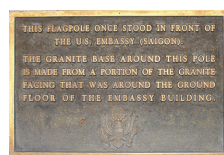


Top left: Nineteenth-century villa (demolished in 1997) that stood on the grounds of the U.S. Embassy. Top right: The U.S. Embassy shortly after its opening in 1967. Bottom right: Aerial view of the property in 2009.

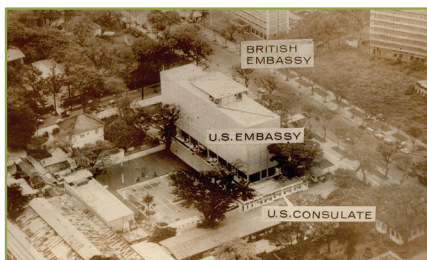
Vestiges of the Past



Today's Le Duan property contains many reminders of its history, including the large banyan tree in the parking lot that dates to the nineteenth century when Saigon was the capital of French Indochina. The bronze memorial marker located on the circular planter commemorates the four U.S. Military Police members and one Marine who died defending the Embassy during the 1968 Tet Offensive. The marker, installed by Ambassador Ray Burghardt in 2002, is a replica of the original marker installed in 1968. Other historic features on the site include the flagpole near the Le Duan entrance, which has been used at U.S. diplomatic posts in Saigon since 1929. The flagpole was a gift of the Standard Oil Company. The base of the flagpole is made from black granite salvaged from the Embassy building that was demolished in 1998.



The building that now houses maintenance, facilities and motorpool offices was on the property when the U.S. Government acquired the lot in 1949. The green field that the Consulate now uses for soccer practice and large receptions marks the approximate location of the old Embassy. The round, concrete planters were a part of the 1968 landscape design for the Embassy.



Top left: Marker commemorating the U.S. service members who were killed on the grounds during the Tet Offensive. Top right: The flagpole. Bottom right: Aerial view of the U.S. Embassy compound, c. 1967.